Questions of Empire

Lord Rosebery

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QUESTIONS OF EMPIRE

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QUESTIONS OF EMPIRE.

Mr. Principal, Ladies, and Gentlemen, this is a pleasant stage in life for many reasons. I had hoped, indeed, that to-day we should have been graced by the presence of our honored and venerated Chancellor, one of the oldest and kindest of my friends, but domestic anxiety at the last moment kept him away. It is rare, I believe, that a Chancellor comes to preside over a Rector's address, — there is, perhaps, some fear of a violent conflict of jurisdiction, — but I should have been all the more honored and pleased by his presence, for I should always be pleased to find him by my side at any period of my life, or in any capacity, as he is a noble and genial specimen of the best type of a Scottish gentleman. Long may he occupy his illustrious chair. And then, on the other hand, there are my young constituents; not merely those who voted for me, but those who voted against me, as well as those who from their unlucky juniority had not the opportunity of doing either. So I stand before you to-day with much gratitude and affection. I have only known in my life two sorts of constituents, the municipal and the academical. Both have been kind to me. Neither has ever rejected me. And I am proud to come and thank you for the great majority by which you elected me last autumn. There is no more generous or inspiring a constituency than the youth of a

University; trained like intellectual athletes for the struggle with the world; straining for the combat, and scornful of its obstacles or its wounds: their hopes and triumphs and sorrows before them. Through the great gate you see the world spread out, and you are eager to be in it. Do not hurry; you will be in it soon enough.

In the full swell of a Roman triumph the victor had always a monitor at hand to remind him that he was mortal. And the winning candidate, if he be prone to exultation in his Rectorial Election, has soon to face a spectre which will promptly reduce his hilarity. I need scarcely say that I allude to the Rectorial Address. The wisest of all your Rectors — I mean Adam Smith — gave a supreme proof of his sagacity by never delivering one at all. We should all of us, perhaps, follow his example, if we dared, or if we honorably could. It is, I admit, a great occasion, if one feels inspired for it. But if not, it is little less than a nightmare. It is not a speech, it is not a sermon, it is not a lecture. It is by tradition too long to be light, too short to be exhaustive. It is something *sui generis*, and I am glad that the genus is not extensive. I cannot even affect to regret that this specimen is my last.

What is the nature of this formidable deliverance? I think that it is sometimes misunderstood. Men of eminence are apt to give their faint recollections of a classical education, or to deliver some glowing rhetoric on the training of the mind. Either course is beyond many of us, and this is not, perhaps, to be regretted. Why do you elect a man a Rector? It is very rarely because of qualifications which would enable him to deliver either of the discourses that I have mentioned. It is singular, indeed, to note how seldom you choose a man of literary eminence to the Lord Rectorship. One reason

may be that he does not show such good sport as a politician. A politician means a fight. A man of letters usually means a triangular fight, if a fight at all. This is obvious enough. But may there not be another reason still? The outward and visible result of a Rectorial Election to the vulgar and gentile mind is the delivery of a Rectorial Address. We in the inner circle of course know better: we know that he is elected to serve on University Courts, and to be an active and intelligent officer of the University. But for that other object it seems to me that you deliberately choose men out of the world, from amid the strife of men, the jangle of tongues, the stress of affairs, and bid them come as Rectors to your academic groves to speak to you of what they know, of that with which they are conversant, and not so much with the subjects with which you deal yourselves.

And I am strengthened in this opinion by the fact that one of the few literary Lord Rectors of recent years pursued this very course — I mean Thomas Carlyle. The other day I had in my hand the spare, pathetic notes which he used for his discourse, all the more pathetic as that day of triumph was on the edge of his wife's grave. That discourse dealt not with the abstract, but with the concrete, with practical advice for study and conduct, drawn from his own experience of life in a conversational style. In all the mass of rectorial addresses it is the least elaborate, the most solemn, and the most telling.

I have thought, then, that I would best serve you, my young constituents, by speaking to you of a subject which affects us all and with which I have had something, though not much, to do, — a concrete contemporary subject, which fills all minds at times, which will increasingly fill yours. I wish to say something to you of that British

Empire of which we are the tenants in fee, of which we inherit the responsibility and the glory. It is so vast a topic that I can only touch a fringe, I can only deal with considerations which directly affect yourselves. It is in the strict sense a political subject, but it is outside party politics and can and should be treated without affecting the most sensitive apprehension. But even here I must make a single exception; for there are some to whom the very word is abhorrent; to whom at any rate the word is under suspicion. It bears to them some taint of disagreeable association. They affect to see in it danger of braggadocio or aggression. Personally I do not share their suspicions. Still it is not the word but the thing that I value. I admit that the term has been constantly prostituted in Britain as well as elsewhere. And yet we cannot discard it, for there is no convenient synonym. If any other word can be invented which as adequately expresses a number of states of vast size under a single sovereign I would gladly consider it. But at present there is none. And in the meantime the word "Empire" represents to us our history, our tradition, our race. It is to us a matter of influence, of peace, of commerce, of civilization, above all a question of faith.

But it is also a matter of business, a practical affair. You have received from your forefathers this great appanage; no one outside an asylum wishes to be rid of it. The question, then, at this time is simply how to do the best with it. That is a tremendous problem, so tremendous that you and I and all of us have to take our share of it. And all of us in this hall, rich or poor, young or old, clever or dull, can do something, each in his line of life, like bees in their cells, to make this Empire surer, better, and happier, even if only by being honest, industrious citizens ourselves. Moreover, the Empire never

needed such loyal service so much as now. Never did it so urgently require the strenuous and united support of its subjects. For in the present state of the world an active vigilance is more than ever required. We have to make sure of our equipment. This we are apt to take for granted. On the contrary I maintain that there is much to overhaul, to examine, and to reconsider; that what would have kept the Empire together in the days when we had an unenvied monopoly of colonies and when armaments were both less vast and less menacing will not suffice now; that there is a disposition to challenge both our naval and commercial position which requires our utmost vigilance; that we may have to test our training, our habits, our character, our capacity for work by severer standards than have hitherto been applied; that we must be called upon for effort and sacrifice if we wish to maintain our place; that we must be prepared, in a word, to set our house in order and to consider whether what has sufficed in the past will suffice in the future.

What is this Empire?

The last calculation seems to be this: that its area is between eleven and twelve millions of square miles, and that its subjects number in round figures some four hundred millions. The details in so spacious a summary matter little. It is already beyond comprehension. And yet one cannot but pause for a moment to reflect that but for a small incident — the very ordinary circumstance of the acceptance of a peerage — this Empire might have been incalculably greater. Had the elder Pitt, when he became First Minister, not left the House of Commons, he would probably have retained his sanity and his authority. He would have prevented, or suppressed, the reckless budget of Charles Townshend, have induced

George III. to listen to reason, have introduced representatives from America into the Imperial Parliament, and preserved the thirteen American colonies to the British Crown. Is it fanciful to dwell for a moment on what might have happened? The Reform Bill which was passed in 1832 would probably have been passed much earlier, for the new blood of America would have burst the old vessels of the constitution. It would have provided for some self-adjusting system of representation, such as now prevails in the United States, by which increasing population is proportionately represented. And at last, when the Americans became the majority, the seat of empire would perhaps have been moved solemnly across the Atlantic, and Britain have become the historical shrine and the European outpost of the world empire.

What an extraordinary revolution it would have been had it been accomplished! The greatest known without bloodshed; the most sublime transference of power in the history of mankind. Our conceptions can scarcely picture the procession across the Atlantic, the greatest sovereign in the greatest fleet in the universe, Ministers, Government, Parliament departing solemnly for the other hemisphere, not, as in the case of the Portuguese sovereigns, emigrating to Brazil, under the spur of necessity, but under the vigorous embrace of the younger world. It is well to bridle the imagination, lest it become fantastic and extravagant.

Moreover, it is a result to which we can scarcely acclimatize ourselves, even in idea. But the other effects might have been scarcely less remarkable. America would have hung on the skirts of Britain and pulled her back out of European complications. She would have profoundly affected the foreign policy of the mother

country in the direction of peace. Her influence in our domestic policy would have been scarcely less potent. It might probably have appeased and even contented Ireland. The ancient constitution of Great Britain would have been rendered more comprehensive and more elastic. On the other hand, the American yearning for liberty would have taken a different form; it would have blended with other traditions and flowed into other moulds. And, above all, had there been no separation, there would have been no war of Independence, no war of 1812, with all the bitter memories that these have left on American soil. To secure that priceless boon I could have been satisfied to see the British Federal Parliament sitting in Columbia Territory. It is difficult indeed to dam the flow of ideas in dealing with so pregnant a possibility. But I restrain myself, because I know that I am dreaming, and that an historical dream, though not a bad relaxation in itself, should not be allowed to become a nightmare. I acknowledge, too, that this is what is called an academical discussion. But where should one be academical if not in the ancient University of Glasgow?

Let us then return to earth, or at any rate to that large proportion of it which is covered by the Union Jack. I have, before wandering into the Empire as it might have been, given you the broad aspect of the Empire as it is. Now, for my purpose it is not important to consider whether this Empire is greater or less than others, for it is impossible to compare states. Mere area, mere population, do not necessarily imply power; still less do they import the security and contentment of the inhabitants. But my main reason for discarding relative proportions is very different. We have to consider not others, but ourselves. It is not alien Empires which

should concern us, except when they menace or compete. Our first main necessary responsibility is to our own. It is so vast, so splendid, so pregnant, that we have to ask ourselves: Are we adequate to it? Can we discharge our responsibility to God and to man for so magnificent, so populous a proportion of the world?

Our answer, offhand, is ready and simple. We are adequate. We do discharge our responsibilities. We are a conquering and imperial race. All over the world we have displayed our mettle. We have discovered and annexed and governed vast territories. We have circled the globe with our commerce. We have penetrated the pagan races with our missionaries. We have inoculated the universe with our institutions. We are apt indeed to believe that our soldiers are braver, our sailors hardier, our captains, naval and military, skilfuller, our statesmen wiser than those of other nations. As for our constitution, there is no Briton at any hour of the day or night who will suffer it to be said that there is any that approaches it.

All this is in a measure true, I hope; at any rate I am not here to dispute it. When indeed I remember some episodes during the past twelve months, I feel that it is hardly possible to exaggerate the courage and character of our nation; the brave boys at the front, the silent endurance at home; I cannot think of these without emotion, as well as with admiration and with pride. But our boasts, even if they be true, do not contain the whole truth. It would be well enough if we could lie on a bank of asphodel, basking in our history, our glory, and our past. That, however, is not possible. Never was it less possible than now. Fifty years ago we had to face a world that was comparatively inert. Europe was concerned with Europe and little more. The armies

of Europe were relatively small and not wholly disproportionate to ours. The United States had no army. Ten or twelve years later a terrible convulsion rent the great Republic, and for a moment her hosts were numbered by the million. That baleful flame shot up to heaven and sank down when the agony was overpast, but its memory remained a portent. Twenty years later a national war arose between France and Germany, which produced a potent German Empire, and converted all the nations of Europe into passive armies. We remained complacent in the confidence that these storms could not pass the Channel. The Channel has indeed done much for us. It has often protected us from the broils of the Continent. It has been our bulwark, though heedless speculators have sought to undermine it. But it cannot guard us from the peaceful attacks of trained and scientific rivalry in the arts of peace. It cannot protect us against the increasing subtlety and development of the arts of war.

There is a further and perhaps a mightier change in the conditions of the world during the past half-century. Fifty years ago the world looked lazily on while we discovered, developed, and annexed the waste or savage territories of the world. All that is now changed. The colonial microbe has penetrated almost every empire except that of Charles V., which has outlived it; and even here I must except his Netherland provinces. France, in the last ten or fifteen years, has annexed perhaps a quarter of Africa, and has made a considerable irruption into Asia. Germany has shown no less a desire to become a colonizing nation. Russia pursues her secular path of unchecked absorption, constantly attracting fresh bodies into her prodigious orbit. Italy has been bitten by the same desire for expansion. The

United States finds itself sitting like a startled hen on a brood of unnumbered islands in the Philippine group. All this is well and fair enough, but it changes our relation to the world. Every mile of unmapped country, every naked tribe of savages, is wrangled over as if it were situated in the centre of Europe. The world has shrunk into a continent of ascertained boundaries. The illimitable and the unknown, the happy field of dreams, have disappeared. That is a blow to imagination, but it is not a fact of substantial importance to us, who do not desire to increase our territories. Indirectly, however, it raises a number of delicate and disputable points. Moreover, a colonial passion is apt to cause an ill feeling, composed of envy, jealousy, and other hostile tendencies towards the ancient colonial empire. This again does not signify, provided we realize it, and do not deserve it, and are ready to deal with it.

Then again there is the question of trade. Foreign countries used to sneer at trade. It was considered below the dignity of warlike races. We were described as a nation of shopkeepers. Now every nation wishes to be a nation of shopkeepers. This new object is pursued with the intelligent purpose which was once applied to the balance of power. That is a great change. We once had a sort of monopoly; we now have to fight for existence.

I summarize these various circumstances, to show how greatly the conditions of our commonwealth and its relations to the outer world have become modified. Some of these changes have passed almost unperceived. I call attention to them, to demonstrate the necessity of our asking ourselves this vital and imperative question: Have our state machinery and methods been examined and remodelled in view of them? If not, no time should be lost.

After all, a state is in essence a great Joint Stock Company with unlimited liability on the part of its shareholders. It is said, and said with truth, that difficult as it is to make a great fortune, it is scarcely less difficult to keep it. With even more of accuracy the same may be said of a business. A fortune without care is apt to disappear, as snow wastes away in a languid thaw. And a business depends on incessant vigilance, on method, on keeping abreast of the times. A business in these days can live but a short time on its past reputation, and what is true of a business is true of an empire. It is found out to be a sham: its aims, its government, its diplomacy, are seen to be out of date by watchful rivals; an excuse is found for a quarrel (and such excuses are easy); the empire is tested, and fails, and succumbs.

As in a business, too, a periodical stocktaking is necessary in a state. So far as mere money is concerned, this is regularly done. We know, with some accuracy, our income, our expenditure, and our debts. But money, though a national necessity and a valuable international weapon, is not everything. A business house in these days looks over its managers and its agents, and considers whether they continue efficient. It surveys its methods and compares them with those of its rivals; it discards those which are obsolete and adopts all improvements. If it does not do this, it is doomed. This sort of stocktaking is unknown to the British Empire. The ordinary Briton thinks it is needless. He says comfortably that we have won Waterloo and Blenheim and Trafalgar, and have produced Nelson and Wellington and Roberts; we have plenty of trade and plenty of money; how on earth could we do better? And this fatal complacency is so ingrained that some despair of

a remedy until we are awakened by a national disaster. For an empire, like a business, if neglected, may become obsolete.

Take the example of Prussia — for I know no other so striking — of the necessity of constant vigilance in the strict maintenance of a state. Though he began to reign over little but an inland spit of sand, her Great Frederick raised her to be the most formidable power in Europe. So he left her when he died in 1786. And yet, twenty years afterwards, owing to the neglect and inadequacy of his successors, she had almost ceased to exist. She was wrecked, and dismembered, and prostrate; she ceased to have a voice among the nations. That interval was short, for the catastrophe brought out the real resources of the national character. You will see in Königsberg, which some of you perhaps venerate as the home of Kant, the little room — at the end of a long hall, chosen for that reason so that none might overhear — the little room where the heroic and saintly Queen Louise worked for the regeneration of the country. But here again, as in the most Teutonic transactions, her statesmen were not satisfied with stop-gap reform. They went to the root of the matter. They indeed effected a sane, simple, and momentous amendment in their army system. But they went much further. Stein and his compeers saw that a malady which had almost produced dissolution required a drastic remedy. They had the courage to face it. At great sacrifice, with natural grumblings and moanings, still audible to us, they cut the feudal system out of the body politic. The remedy was severe, but it saved the patient. In no other country but Prussia would such a course, even under such circumstances, have been possible. But the North German when he sees that things go wrong will at once return to first principles. So

Prussia was saved, and emerged once more a first-rate power. Then there was another interval on which it is not necessary to dwell. And again, with the aid of trained, able servants not afraid to face heroic measures, she emerged more puissant than ever before. Can there be a clearer instance of the building up of a power by vigilant care, of its quick destruction by neglect, and of its recovery by a return to the secret of its original success?

The first question, then, as I have said, which we must put to ourselves, and we cannot put a more momentous one, is: Are we worthy of this prodigious inheritance? Is the race which holds it capable of maintaining and developing it? Are we, like the Romans, not merely a brave, but also a persistent, business-like, alert, governing people? And if we can answer this affirmatively, as I hope we can, we have these further questions to ask ourselves: Are we going the right way about our work, and are our methods abreast of our time?

I do not profess to ask these questions to-day, still less to answer them. But I suggest that you should ask them of yourselves, for they concern you all. You cannot, indeed, give a full or adequate answer; but the questions will recur to you as long as you live. At different periods of life you will give different answers, but no one can attempt a complete reply. Even if the nation chose to ask them of itself, I suppose it would only appoint a Royal Commission, which would produce a library of bluebooks when we were in our graves. And yet the nation might do worse. Suppose when it decennially takes stock of its population, that it took stock of a little more. Suppose, when it numbered the people, that it tested their plight; that it inquired if their condition were better or worse than ten years before; and

so as to the position of our industries, of our education, of our naval and military systems. Suppose that the State did at some such periods demand an account of each of its stewards. The general result would probably be satisfactory; but it may be predicted with much more certainty that weaknesses, and abuses, and stagnation would be discovered — an ill condition, which is apt when neglected to be contagious and dangerous.

The nation does, indeed, confess itself from time to time spasmodically through the newspapers. But that impulse, sincere though it be, is apt to disappear with the stress which inspired it. It is not sustained or business-like. It evaporates in a committee, or in some new ecstasy. Dogged, unrelenting, unreserved self-examination there is none; perhaps none is possible. The churches, it is true, are always demanding it — all the more honor to them. But the adverb "always" contains the secret of their want of success, or of their only partial success. They are always, necessarily, doing it, so they necessarily deaden their effect; it is their business to do it, and so men pass on. The shadow of the future is as vain as all other shadows. Prosperity, while it endures, is the drug, the hashish, which blinds the patient to all but golden visions. And yet we are nearing an epoch of no common kind, short indeed in the lives of nations, but longer than the life of man, when we may well pause to take stock. Within six weeks we shall have closed the nineteenth century, and have entered on a new one for better or for worse. It is, of course, only an imaginary division of time, though it seems solemn enough, for we are on a pinnacle of the world's temple where we can look forward or look back.

What will that twentieth century be? What will be its distinctive note? Of the nineteenth we may say

generally that it has been an era of emancipation, considerable though not complete. Nations, as a rule, have been sorted into boundaries more consonant with their aspirations and traditions than was formerly the case. The tyranny of sects, in Britain, at any rate, has partially abated. The undue pressure of government has diminished. Slavery has disappeared. All over the world there have been great strides towards freedom; and, though inadequate, they have been so considerable as to produce for a moment an apathy of self-satisfaction. But the twentieth! What does it bear in its awful womb? Of one thing only can we be certain — that it will be a period of keen, intelligent, almost fierce international competition, more probably in the arts of peace even than in the arts of war. How, then, should we prepare for such an epoch and such a conflict?

It is a matter in which Universities have a deep concern. For there is one fact, at any rate, to which we cannot be blind. The first need of our country is a want of men. We want men for all sorts of high positions — first-rate men, if possible; if not, as nearly first rate as may be. The supply of such men is never excessive, but, as the Empire has increased, so has the demand, and the supply seems to be much less elastic. In other words, the development and expansion of the Empire have produced a corresponding demand for first-rate men, but the supply has remained, at best, stationary. Of course we do not employ all those that we have, for by the balance of our constitution, while one half of our capable statesmen is in full work, the other half is, by that fact, standing idle in the market-place with no one to hire them. This used to be on a five years' shift, but all that is now altered. Anyhow, it is a terrible waste. But, putting that incident apart, even among the fixed eternal stars

of the public service there is not a sufficient supply of men for the purposes of government. I could name a typical diplomatist, a typical soldier, a typical civil servant, and could say of each of them that could he be multiplied by forty the market would not be glutted. I am not gloomy about all this. I believe that the men, or something of the kind, are there; the difficulty is to find them. The processes of discovery and selection are apt to lead to jobbery, so we employ the slow ladder of a fixed service and of promotion by seniority. Now a senior is a very good thing, but I am sure that I shall have the unanimous approval of my constituents in saying that a junior is a better — wherever, at any rate, physical strength and activity are required. Our civil service is a noble one, perhaps matchless — certainly unsurpassed. Its zeal and capacity for its special work are admirable. Its members are loyal to all chiefs and strenuous to help them. But it does not give us what we want for the elastic needs of the Empire. A service of that kind, however excellent, and perhaps because it is excellent, is apt to become a caste. Moreover, the admittance to it is by brain-work alone. Now brains, though necessary and desirable, are not everything; for administration under varying climes and circumstances, what I may call wild administration, you want much more. You want, for this purpose, force of character, quick decision, physical activity, and endurance of all kinds, besides, if possible, the indefinable qualities which sway mankind. You want men who will go anywhere at a moment's notice and do anything. These qualities cannot be tested by civil service examiners. And yet we have a good deal of dare-devil, adaptable raw material on hand. Some of the young generals, who have come through the arduous experiences of this war, will be fit

for almost anything that they may be called on to do. But these have been seasoned by the severest of training, and we cannot often afford such an education.

This dearth of men, as I have said, concerns you directly, for you are part of the coming generation, and I hope that there may be among my constituents some of these necessary men. But this at any rate is clear, that it is the function of our Universities to produce such men.

And this leads me to another question. Are we setting ourselves sufficiently to train such men? I doubt it. The most illustrious of our public schools has no modern side. Oxford and Cambridge still exact their dole of Latin and Greek. I cannot believe from the imperial point of view, having regard to the changed conditions of the world, that this is necessary, or adequate, or wise. I concede Latin as a training instrument and a universal language. But how about Greek? It is perhaps the noblest of tongues: it enshrines perhaps the noblest of literatures. To learned men it is a necessity. But must it be a part of the necessary equipment of the ordinary youth of the nineteenth century, who has so much to learn in order to be equal to his age? Heine once remarked with sardonic humor: "How fortunate were the Romans, that they had not to learn the Latin grammar, for if so they would not have had time to conquer the world." Well, I pass the Latin grammar with a gloomy respect, but I will say that the Greek grammar, except in the learned professions, seems to me a heavy burden for our Empire, subject as it is to eager and intelligent competition. I think that when our national ignorance of foreign languages has become not merely a by-word but almost a commercial disaster we might reconsider part of our educational apparatus. This is

no new question. Thirty-three years ago it was raised at Edinburgh by one who was not merely a remarkable statesman, but a brilliant scholar. He had been a famous classical tutor at Oxford, yet nevertheless he protested against our educational bondage to the dead languages. The same protest is being raised in Edinburgh again to-day, but this time by the voice of the mercantile community. The leading bodies of that calling lately appointed a committee to consider the subject of commercial education. Their report is well worth reading. They speak of the ancient tongues with courtesy and respect, but they demand something more practically useful, less divorced from every-day life. For one thing, they urge with earnestness the better teaching of modern languages. There is required, they say, on the part of the educational authorities, an admission that a man may be an educated and even a cultured gentleman, although he has not seriously studied Latin or Greek; and they further point out that both France and Germany possess invaluable literatures, with the advantage that they are in languages which are living and not dead. I agree with them in thinking that for the purposes of the present age, especially for the merchant and the politician, there is required a more modern education, more especially as regards languages. I do not pretend that a modern education will necessarily produce the men you need for all purposes of administration. No; but it will help you to train them, it will give them the weapons of life, it will give you citizens who are so far capable of meeting the new requirements of the world.

I must not expatiate. I will merely say that we want good men for the public service; that the demand has grown with the growth of the Empire, and that the supply has failed to keep pace with it. I doubt, moreover,

whether we are going the right way to rear such a supply. But that is only a small part of the question of race. In reality we do not depend so much on our governments as would seem to be the case. Looking back over the past century, there is one luminous fact — how little the Anglo-Saxon nations depend on their governments, or owe to them. The people wield their own destinies; they walk their own paths. The governments are passing signs; as it were the cockades of different colors which used to be worn, and which denoted the parties to which the wearers belonged. And this view of the case incalculably enhances the importance of our race problem. Our people in the main govern themselves — let them be worthy governors; mentally and physically let them be worthy of their high destiny.

But education, as I have said, is only a part of our race problem. An empire such as ours requires as its first condition an imperial race — a race vigorous and industrious and intrepid. Are we rearing such a race? In the rural districts I trust that we are. I meet the children near Edinburgh returning from school, and I will match them against any children in the world. But in the great cities, in the rookeries and slums which still survive, an imperial race cannot be reared. You can scarcely produce anything in those foul nests of crime and disease but a progeny doomed from its birth to misery and ignominy. That is a rift in the cornerstone of your commonwealth, but it brings some of you directly into its service. For many here are reared to the service of medicine. They will be physicians, surgeons, medical officers, medical inspectors. Remember, then, that where you promote health and arrest disease, where you convert an unhealthy citizen into a healthy one, where you exercise your authority to promote sanitary conditions and sup-

press those which are the reverse, you in doing your duty are also working for the Empire. "*Sanitas sanitatum, omnia sanitas*," said one of your dead Rectors, and he did not greatly exaggerate. Health of mind and body exalt a nation in the competition of the universe. The survival of the fittest is an absolute truth in the conditions of the modern world. Even if our schools and universities train the national mind efficiently, the national body may not be neglected. Another of your dead Rectors declared, in a phrase scarcely less famous than Lord Beaconsfield's, that the schoolmaster was abroad — meaning that he was active. Let us hope that we may soon feel that the medical officer is abroad with sufficient power in his arm, power which he must derive from public opinion as well as from his central or municipal employers.

And there are other relative questions which we cannot ignore. How do we stand with regard to those healthy, hardy, frugal virtues which mean so much, physically and morally, to a people? Whether an insidious and excessive luxury is not prevalent among us; whether the passion for wealth, its influence, and the worship it receives, be not a danger; whether, indeed, our land is not becoming the playground and pleasance of the plutocrats of all nations, in itself a symptom not wholly bad, but yet not wholly good, for a plutocracy is one of the most detestable of all dominations; these are grave questions with which we are confronted. Against this apparent luxury we set the rough manliness of our sports, our cricket, our football, our hunting. That in itself is no adequate answer, for even healthy sport, like other good things, may be overdone. But, looking back at the past as a guide for the future, I ask myself what was the secret of the marvellous success of the Scottish

people during the last century in Scotland itself, in England, and in the outer Britains? It was not achieved in purple and fine linen, in soft raiment, or in kings' houses. No! their poverty was equal to their patriotism: their energy to both. How did they succeed? By intense industry, by severe frugality, by constant adaptability to all circumstances and all conditions, however rigorous and novel they might be. And so it was that they raised Scotland to wealth and Scotsmen to power, and made both Scotland and her sons the objects of that jealousy and suspicion which are some of the sincerest testimonies to success.

I have spoken of their intense industry, and this leads me to another question. Do we work hard enough? — or rather, as I would put it, Are we thorough enough? That was a great word, "thorough," bequeathed to us by one of the most memorable of British statesmen: a great word, not as he used it, but a word in itself which should thrill through all mankind from the age of reason to the shadow of death. But fortune, success, and well-being are apt to make us forget it. I doubt if Jeshurun, in his proverbial prosperity, kicked thoroughly; it was probably a sort of elegant flourish. And now we cannot but observe that it is beginning to be hinted that we are a nation of amateurs. Is this true? If so, it is not merely a grave charge, but an obvious danger. Let us test it in passing. For example, we are warriors, and merchants, and statesmen. Are we as thorough masters of these crafts as we should be? Wars, for example, always find us unprepared. I dare say no more, but so much is incontrovertible. And yet, on the other hand, I cannot help suspecting that in the most consummate military administration which now exists, nothing is left to chance which can be guarded against by fore-

thought. Then, again, in statesmanship (I speak, of course, of all our statesmen of all parties), do we conspicuously shine? Are we business-like and thorough? Do we anticipate or follow events? Are our ministries not overwhelmed by the treble task of departmental administration, of preparing policies, and of oratorical combat, inside and outside Parliament? We have abroad the reputation of being subtle, unscrupulous, and of corrupting the universe with our gold. But, as a matter of fact, we are never subtle, seldom unscrupulous, and have no gold which Parliament would allow to be used in corruption. It is almost a reproach to the honorable statesmanship of Great Britain that abstaining as it does, voluntarily or involuntarily, from these successful qualities, it should have managed to earn all the opprobrium attached to them. Then is our policy sufficiently persistent and continuous to ensure success? I cannot give an answer to so broad a question on this occasion. But, as in the military case, I will cite another Power. There is one signal quality which I specially admire in the policy of Russia. It is practically unaffected by the life of man or the lapse of time — it moves on, as it were, by its own impetus; it is silent, concentrated, perpetual, and unbroken; it is, therefore, successful. But I must pass from these arts, for such topics verge on that forbidden territory which no Rector can touch and survive.

Commerce, however, comes fairly within my limits as a bond of Empire, and affects our University, which stands aloft in such a teeming mart. Here, then, is, at any rate, ample opportunity for taking stock and considering methods. I cannot enter into the discussion whether there is cause for alarm as to the future of our trade; there is no time for that nor is this the place. But it may fairly be alleged that there are disquieting symptoms.

Whether these symptoms be truthful indications or not, they are at any rate worthy of careful, incisive investigation. In some quarters such indications are never neglected. I am greatly struck by a passage in the report of the United States Consul at Chemnitz, cited in the pamphlet in which our University sets forth its requirements. "If an industry in Germany languishes," he says, "immediately a commission inquires into the causes, and recommends remedial measures, among which usually is the advice to establish technical or industrial schools, devoted to the branch of business under consideration." In a word, they go to the root, to the principle, to the source. This is thoroughness, this is the scientific method applied to manufacture, and we see its success. The Americans, I gather, have hitherto applied themselves rather less to the principles than the applications of science. I do not pretend to say which are right. The Germans are alarmed at the development of American commerce, and we are alarmed at both. At any rate, both in Germany and the United States you see an expenditure and a systematic devotion to commercial, and technical, and scientific training. I know that much is done, too, in Great Britain. But I doubt if even that is carried out in the same methodical way; nor is there anything like the same lavish, though well-considered expenditure. It always seems to me as if in Germany nothing, and in Britain everything, is left to chance. Nothing but a miracle can stop us, think the Germans, when they have completed their preparations. We shall have our usual miracle, thinks the cheerful Briton, as he sets out a good deal in arrear. With the same intelligent persistence with which the German makes war, he has entered on the peaceful conflict of commerce, and therefore has achieved the same brilliant

success. We need not envy that success, we do not grudge it; but it is well to observe it, and to note its causes.

Commerce, then, is a bond of Empire which this University by its training may do much to strengthen. The mercantile committee at Edinburgh demand, indeed, that to our Universities shall be added a commercial faculty which would stimulate the commercial side in our secondary schools, and which would be of substantial importance in attracting to the University men who are about to enter on a commercial life. They "believe that a University education would be of the greatest service to the men who are to occupy the chief position in large commercial undertakings." Our University has not as yet seen its way, where so much has to done, to take this new and important step. It has done much, it is doing much, but it is well aware of its weakness. It is now appealing for aid to place itself on a properly scientific footing, a footing adequate to its position in this great commercial community, which so greatly needs and which can so fruitfully utilize opportunities of technical and scientific training. It will not, I think, appeal to the second city of the Empire in vain.

But the newest of our universities has advantages which are denied to the more ancient with regard to modern requirements. For the practical purposes of the present day a university which starts in the twentieth century has a great superiority over a university founded in the fifteenth; more especially when it is launched with keen intelligence of direction and ample funds, as is the new University of Birmingham. These practical universities are the universities of the future, for the average man who has to work for his livelihood cannot superadd the learning of the dead to the educational re-

quirements of his life and his profession. There will always be universities, or at any rate colleges, for the scholar, the teacher, and the divine; but year by year the ancient universities will have to adapt themselves more and more to modern exigencies. And where so much has to be absolutely novel it is perhaps easier to begin than to remodel or adapt. So that the new universities which do not require for their utilitarian purposes hoary antiquity or ancient prescription will have an advantage over the venerable schools which have for centuries guarded and interpreted and transmitted the accumulated treasures of erudition.

There was a time, long years ago, when the spheres of action and of learning were separate and distinct; when laymen dealt hard blows and left letters to the priesthood. That was to some extent the case when our oldest universities were founded. But the separation daily narrows, if it has not already disappeared. It has been said that the true university of our days is a collection of books. What if a future philosopher shall say that the best university is a workshop? And yet the latter definition bids fair to be the sounder of the two. The training of our schools and colleges must daily become more and more the training for action, for practical purpose. The question will be asked of the product of our educational system: "Here is a young fellow of twenty; he has passed the best years of acquisition and impression; he has cost so much;—what is his value? for what in all the manifold activities of the world is he fit?" And if the answer be not satisfactory, if the product be only a sort of learned mummy, the system will be condemned. Are there not thousands of lads to-day plodding away, or supposed to be plodding away, at the ancient classics who will never make anything of those

classics, and who, at the first possible moment, will cast them into space never to reopen them? Think of the wasted time that that implies; not all wasted perhaps, for something may have been gained in power of application, but entirely wasted so far as available knowledge is concerned. And if you consider, as you will have to consider in the stress of competition, that the time and energy of her citizens is part of the capital of the commonwealth, all those wasted years represent a dead loss to the Empire.

If, then, these recent events and the present conditions of the world induce thinkers and leaders in this country to test our strength and methods for the great — but, I hope, peaceful — struggle before us, they must reckon the training of man. On that, under Providence, depends the future, and the immediate future, of the race; and what is Empire but the predominance of race?

How is that predominance to be secured? Remember the conditions: nations all becoming more dense and numerous, and therefore more hungry and more difficult to satisfy; nations more and more educated and intelligent, more observant of each other; nations more and more alive to their substantial interests and capable of pursuing them; nations, therefore, increasingly aware of the vital necessity of a healthy, growing commerce, and fiercely determined to obtain it; nations more and more civilized, and therefore less and less anxious for the wager of battle, but still ready even for that, if it be necessary for their new objects. After all, when you have reduced all this to its last expression, it comes to this — the keener and more developed intelligence of humanity, stimulated by competition and enhanced by training. It is with that intelligence that we have to struggle and to vie.

This conflict we have no reason to fear, if we choose to rouse ourselves. We have, I believe, the best natural material in the world. But I doubt if we are sufficiently alive to the exigencies of the situation. It is perhaps well to revel in a sunburst of prosperity and of high wages. It may be well to owe much of that prosperity to an unbounded exportation of coal, of which we have a large but limited supply, and which is vitally necessary to us as the element of existence. It is well in a time of stress to send a host of spirited volunteers to the front, to admire their hereditary valor, and to welcome them back. It is well to be convinced that we are the finest fellows on the earth, and supreme on the seas. If that be the truth it is comfortable enough. But the mere exhilarating impression is scarcely sufficient. If it were founded on hard, tested facts it would be eminently satisfactory. But is it?

There is no disparagement implied in the criticism of this attitude. There is only a sense of the heedless self-confidence of strength. Our people do not realize the actual closeness of competition, and the cold, elaborate, vigilant science which that fact involves. The calculating tortoise in these days will always overtake the exuberant hare; and yet even the tortoise will seek to improve his pace. Everything that survives becomes refined to an art. Take your games as an instance. Chess, I suppose, was in its inception an artless diversion. It now taxes the most acute minds, and elicits new powers from the brain. The first cricketer, as I judge from portraits, played with an elementary club, which would now be wholly incompetent to defend a wicket for an instant. But football affords an even stronger illustration. I suppose it began in the childish propensity to play with a ball, and the boyish anxiety to

kick anything. But it has developed into a science. I know of no sport which affords such lessons for national success as Association football. I do not indeed understand the refinements of the game. But the meanest intellect can grasp that it implies incessant watchfulness; that its essence is an alert combination of all powers for one object; that indolence or selfishness are fatal; that the player indeed who does not do his best to coöperate or who plays for his own hand must necessarily be outlawed. So it is with nations. If they desire to survive they must constantly sharpen their intelligence and equipment. They need the constant coöperation of the government with the governed; of science and vigilance with commerce; of the teachers with the taught, and with the age in which they teach.

Remember too this historical fact. We belong to a nation which has ever been ambitious. Under the great Edwards and Harries and the mighty reign of Elizabeth, ambition grew and swelled and has never had leisure to shrink. But ambition, though an exulting, is an exacting virtue. It is made of stern stuff; it cannot endure apathy or even content. It exacts constant sacrifice and untiring endeavor. Planting a flag here and there, or demarcating regions with a red line on a map, are vain diversions if they do not imply an unswerving purpose to develop and to maintain. But maintenance requires that we shall be alive to all modern methods. Yet we are apt to forget this, and to imagine that our swaddling clothes will suffice for our maturity.

I urge you then, gentlemen, to realize in your own persons and studies the responsibility which rests on yourselves. You are, after all, members of that company of adventurers (used in the Elizabethan and not the modern sense) which is embarked in the business of

carrying this British Empire through the twentieth century. Each of you has his share in that glorious heritage, and each of you is answerable for that share. Be, then, practical partners, intelligent partners, industrious partners, and so you will be in the best sense practical, intelligent, industrious imperialists. Be inspired in your various callings with the thought of the service that you can do to your country in faithfully following your profession, so that in doing private you are doing public duty too. The Church, the Law, and Medicine, those chaste and venerable sisters, will, I suppose, claim most of you, and in the service of each you have ample opportunities of rendering service to the commonwealth. The Law is the ladder to Parliament; and the tribunal of appeal is, and I hope will increasingly be, a constitutional bond of Empire. The missions of the Churches, and the Churches themselves, apart from their sacred functions and home labors, which directly serve the state so far as they raise their flocks, have incalculably aided in the expansion, consolidation, and civilization of the Empire. And Medicine should tend and raise the race, on which all depends. For from my point of view there is not a close in the darkest quarters of Glasgow, or a crofter's cabin in the Hebrides, which is not a matter of imperial concern, quite as truly, in its proportion and degree, as those more glowing topics to which that adjective is too often limited.

And mark this: in all that I have said there is no word of war, not even the beat of a drum, or the distant singing of a bullet. To some the Empire is little else, and that makes many hate the word. That is not my view. Our Empire is not founded on the precedents associated with that name. It is not the realm of conquest which that term has been used to imply. It has often

used the sword, it could not exist without the sword, but it does not live by the sword. Defence and readiness to fight are vital enough in their way, but not less vital is the civil and domestic side: the commerce, the education, the intelligence, the unceasing leaven of a high and the sour decadence of a low ideal. War and conquest can fill the lives of but a part of the nation: a sane and simple duty to the Empire may well inspire the whole.

And when we work in that spirit we should receive grace from the idea, from that glorious vision transformed into fact — the British Empire.

Remember how incomparably Shakespeare described it:

> "This royal throne of kings, this sceptered isle,
> This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
> This other Eden, demi-paradise,
> This fortress built by Nature for herself
> Against infection and the hand of war,
> This happy breed of men — this little world,
> This precious stone set in the silver sea,
> . . . . . .
> This blessed spot, this earth, this realm, this England."

And yet that was only the source and centre of what we now behold, which has soared so far beyond whatever Shakespeare can have conceived.

How marvellous it all is! Built not by saints and angels, but the work of men's hands; cemented with men's honest blood and with a world of tears, welded by the best brains of centuries past; not without the taint and reproach incidental to all human work, but constructed on the whole with pure and splendid purpose. Human, and yet not wholly human, for the most heedless and the most cynical must see the finger of the Divine. Growing as trees grow, while others slept; fed by the

faults of others as well as by the character of our fathers; reaching with the ripple of a resistless tide over tracts, and islands, and continents, until our little Britain woke up to find herself the foster-mother of nations and the source of united empires. Do we not hail in this less the energy and fortune of a race than the supreme direction of the Almighty? Shall we not, while we adore the blessing, acknowledge the responsibility? And while we see, far away in the rich horizons, growing generations fulfilling the promise, do we not own with resolution mingled with awe the honorable duty incumbent on ourselves? Shall we then falter or fail? The answer is not doubtful. We will rather pray that strength may be given us, adequate and abundant, to shrink from no sacrifice in the fulfilment of our mission; that we may be true to the high tradition of our forefathers; and that we may transmit their bequest to our children, aye, and, please God, to their remote descendants, enriched and undefiled, this blessed and splendid dominion.

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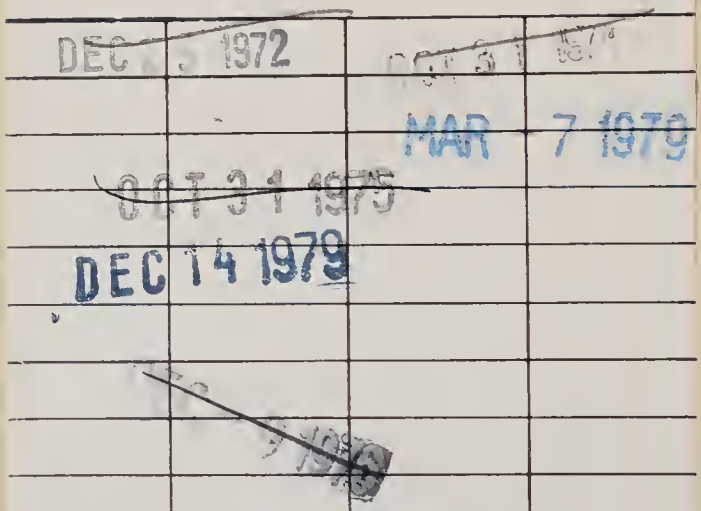

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